



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy

Floor Statement

House Consideration of H.R. 4840, Rep. Murphy's Bill to Designate the USPS Facility at 567  
East Franklin Street in Oviedo, Florida After Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe

*May 7, 2018*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

President Kennedy once said that “a nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”

Consistent with that principle, my bill would designate a U.S. post office building in Oviedo, Florida after Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe.

Sergeant First Class Cashe died in 2005 as a result of wounds suffered while serving in Iraq.

When I recount the actions this American soldier and son of Oviedo performed—and what he endured in the process—it will take your breath away.

The word “hero” is ascribed to many people in our society, perhaps a bit too casually, but this was heroism in its purest and most profound sense.

Let me start this story at the beginning.

Alwyn was born in 1970 in Sanford, Florida, and was raised in Oviedo, attending Oviedo High School. He was the youngest of nine children, five girls and four boys. The family didn't have much money, but they had plenty of pride. When Alwyn was six, his father passed away. Alwyn's mother Ruby Mae worked long hours at demanding jobs—working on an assembly line and, later, as a custodian at Florida Tech, since renamed the University of Central Florida.

One of Alwyn's sisters, Kasinal, describes her brother as the baby of the family, rambunctious, a little spoiled by his siblings, and—of course—deeply loved.

Alwyn enlisted in the military after high school. Kasinal said it had a transformational effect, turning this somewhat aimless boy into a resolute man, the civilian into a soldier. And not just any soldier, but a soldier's soldier, a tough-as-nails infantryman, and an old-school leader in the best sense of the term.

As Kasinal put it, Alwyn “bled Army green” right from the start. The Army gave him a second family with even more brothers and sisters, bound together by the American flag on their uniform and the events they experienced and endured together, from boot camp to combat.

On October 17, 2005, Alwyn—now Sergeant First Class Cashe—was on his second deployment to Iraq.

That fateful day, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle carrying him, six other American soldiers, and the squad’s Iraqi interpreter struck an IED. The blast instantly killed the interpreter and ruptured the vehicle’s fuel cell. Flames engulfed the vehicle. Initially only lightly injured, but covered in fuel, Sergeant First Class Cashe descended into the hull, extracted the driver, who was on fire, and extinguished the flames. At this point, multiple soldiers remained in the vehicle, one of whom managed to open the rear hatch.

With no regard for his own safety, Sergeant First Class Cashe rushed to the back of the vehicle, reached into the hot flames, and started pulling out soldiers. His fuel-soaked uniform caught fire and the flames spread quickly over his body. Despite what must have been terrible pain, he returned to the vehicle twice more to extract his soldiers—all while he was still on fire and exposed to enemy gunfire.

By the time he had extracted all of his soldiers from the vehicle, Sergeant First Class Cashe had the most severe injuries. Second- and third-degree burns covered 72 percent of his body. Nevertheless, he refused to be evacuated until all his soldiers were medevac’d out before him.

When he arrived at the U.S. military hospital at Balad Air Base in Iraq, he was still fully conscious. What remained of his uniform had melted to his skin. Yet he tried to fight off the nurses, insisting that they treat everyone else first. Despite determined efforts to save his life at various hospitals abroad and in the states, he eventually succumbed to his wounds on November 8, 2005—surrounded by members of both his biological family and his Army family.

Scripture teaches us that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends, and Sergeant First Class Cashe made the ultimate expression of love.

After his passing, he received the Silver Star, the third-highest combat award that the Army confers.

Over the past years, there has been a painstaking effort to have Sergeant First Class Cashe’s Silver Star upgraded to the Medal of Honor, an award no African-American has received since 1969. Notably, this effort has been led by the battalion commander who nominated Sergeant First Class Cashe for the Silver Star. This individual—now a two-star general—came to believe that Sergeant First Class Cashe deserves the highest award for valor that our nation bestows. I strongly agree with this conclusion, and have written to the Secretary of the Army to express my view.

We cannot bring Sergeant First Class Cashe back, or erase the pain felt by his sister Kasinal, his other family members, and the men and women in uniform who served beside him.

But we *can* pay tribute to his life and legacy. We can engrave his name on a plaque and designate a federal building in his honor, so the American public never forgets this remarkable man who laid down his life for his friends in service to our country.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this legislation.